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GOP has no problem extending tax cuts for the rich

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SENATE REPUBLICANS, committed as they are to preventing the debt from mounting further, can't approve an extension of unemployment benefits [because it would cost \\$35 billion](#). But they are untroubled by the notion of digging the hole \$678 billion deeper by extending President Bush's tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans. [On Fox News Sunday](#), Chris Wallace asked Republican Whip Jon Kyl (R-Ariz.) about this contradiction. Mr. Kyl's response is worth examining because of what it says about the GOP's refusal to practice the fiscal responsibility it preaches.

Mr. Kyl's first line of defense was to dismiss Mr. Wallace's query as "a loaded question" because "the Bush tax cuts applied to every single American." Mr. Wallace pointed out that he was only referring to the top tax brackets, but Mr. Kyl persisted in his refusal to answer. "So let's, first of all, start with those that don't apply to the wealthy. Shouldn't those be extended?" Never mind that no one in a policymaking position -- not President Obama, not Democrats in Congress -- is arguing against extending those tax cuts, at least temporarily. So when Mr. Kyl contends that "all of that goes away," he is just blowing smoke.

Eventually, Mr. Kyl trotted out the tired and unsubstantiated argument that the tax cuts for the wealthy must be extended because otherwise "you're going to clobber small business." Mr. Wallace persisted: "But, sir, . . . how are you going to pay the \$678 billion?" -- at which point Mr. Kyl descended into nonsense. "You should never raise taxes in order to cut taxes," he declared. "Surely Congress has the authority, and it would be right to, if we decide we want to cut taxes to spur the economy, not to have to raise taxes in order to offset those costs. You do need to offset the cost of increased spending, and that's what Republicans object to. But you should never have to offset [the] cost of a deliberate decision to reduce tax rates on Americans."

Huh? No one's talking about cutting taxes on the wealthy to stimulate the economy. The issue is whether the tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans should be extended, adding another \$678 billion to the deficit over the next decade. The tax cuts, it's worth remembering, passed originally in 2001 with the argument that the surplus was so large that rates could be cut with budgetary room to spare. Now that the fiscal picture has deteriorated so badly, the questions remains: How are you going to pay the \$678 billion? And if you don't, how are you going to justify the added damage to an already grim fiscal outlook?

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